

Dear Commissioners of the FCC,

I am greatly disappointed by broadcast television programming that touches on this year's presidential campaign. There is scant coverage of issues that matter to our citizenry, and a highly disturbing erosion of principles governing the conduct of American media. The breakdown threatens our democracy. Unfortunately, the FCC not only appears complicit in the problems, but may actually be part of the cause in the first place.

More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections. Even worse, our society appears to be permitting restrictions on freedom of the press that few would find acceptable -- if they were aware of the restrictions that are being imposed.

Since broadcasters have so many conflicts of interest as a result of their various corporate affiliations, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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